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ABSTRACT

This document presents one module in a set of training resources for trainers to use with parents and/or professionals serving children with disabilities; focus is on communication skills. The modules stress content and activities that build skills and offer resources to promote parent-professional collaboration. Each training module takes about 2 hours. The module guide has eight sections: a publicity flyer, topic narrative, overview, trainer agenda, activities, summary, bibliography, and evaluation. Introductory information explains how to use the modules including conducting a needs assessment, planning the training, selecting the training module, implementation, evaluation, and followup. Objectives of this module are: (1) survey assertive interactions; (2) develop an understanding of the premise and research on which assertiveness training is based; (3) identify potential barriers to effective communication; (4) become familiar with the differences between assertive, aggressive, and nonassertive communication; (5) practice effective communication skills; (6) accept personal rights and overcome barriers to effective communication; and (7) identify dysfunctional personal messages. A bibliography identifies 15 books, magazines, or other resources. (DB)

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COMMUNICATION SKILLS

California State Department of Education
Bill Honig, Superintendent of Public Instruction
Sacramento, CA 1988

EC 222045

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California State Department of Education
Special Education Division
Program, Curriculum and Training Unit

Presents A Module on:

Communication Skills

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1988

This module, as well as thirteen others, were produced under the direction of Karl E. Murray and Susan Westaby of the Program, Curriculum and Training Unit, Special Education Division, CA State Department of Education. The modules are being field-tested throughout 1988. During this field-test stage, they are available by sending $ 5.00 for each module (includes tax and mailing) to: Parent Training Modules, CA State Department of Education, P.O. Box 944272 - Room 621B, Sacramento, CA 94244-2720. Make checks payable to Parent Training Modules.

INTRODUCTION

The Parent/Professional Training Modules have been developed to serve as a core set of training resources for trainers to use primarily with groups of parents. Some of the trainings were designed specifically for combined groups of parents and professionals, and all the trainings can be adapted for use with parents or professionals as separate or combined audiences. The training modules in the series focus on content and activities that build skills and offer resources to promote parent-professional collaboration to ensure quality education for all students with disabilities. There are fourteen training modules in this series:

Parent Professional Collaboration
Parental Involvement
Stress and Support in the Family
Coping with Loss and Change
Parent Support Groups
An Effective Community Advisory Committee
Community Advisory Committee Leadership Training
Communication Skills
The Individualized Education Program: Rights and Responsibilities
Placement in the Least Restrictive Environment
Training for Professionals Working with Families
Parent Professional Collaboration in Planning for Employment
Transition Planning
Interagency Collaboration: The Parents' Role

Each training module has eight sections:

Flyer
Topic Narrative
Overview
Trainer Agenda
Activities
Summary
Bibliography
Evaluation

Within each of these sections there are these materials:

Flyer - The Flyer highlights what participants can expect to learn by attending the training. It can be personalized for each training by adding date, time, and location in the appropriate spaces.

Topic Narrative -- The Topic Narrative contains content information specifically for the trainer. Trainers use the information to enhance their knowledge and understanding of the subject matter of the training module.

Overview -- The Overview contains the goals and objectives for the module; and the content and presentation strategy for each activity contained within the module.

Trainer Agenda -- The Trainer Agenda contains details of trainer and participant activities, materials and media. It is a suggested agenda that trainers can personalize to fit their style and the specific needs of the participants. A few modules that deal with sensitive or difficult content have Trainer Tips included in the Agenda section.

Summary -- The Summary contains highlights of all the content information presented in activities within the training. The Summary was designed to provide information to prospective participants and to workshop planners.

Bibliography -- The Bibliography contains the names of books, magazines and other resources that were used as references in developing the training modules and may serve as a list of suggested reading materials for trainers as well as participants.

Evaluation -- The Evaluation contains questions that directly assess the objectives of the module as well as some general questions to evaluate the usefulness of materials and trainer effectiveness.

The Parent/Professional Training Modules have been designed to be a flexible and expandable resource for trainers of parents and professionals. It can be housed in binders or in file folders and rearranged as needed. Trainers are urged to add articles, resources and other materials that will make each training reflect their individual style and meet the needs of the participants.

HOW TO USE THESE TRAINING MODULES

Conduct a Needs Assessment:

Gather as much information as you can about the groups that you will be working with. The following types of questions may help:

Does the group meet regularly or is it assembled specifically for the purpose of this training?

What does the group want to accomplish? Does it have a stated goal? Are there a set of outcomes that the group wants to achieve?

Who is involved in the group (agencies and organizations)?

If the group is an ongoing group, how is the group organized? (officers, executive committee, standing committees, task groups, etc.)

What has the group already done? What training has the group already received?

What is the group working on now?

How does the group get things done?

Has the group conducted a needs assessment to determine the group's need for training and the training topics of interest?

Plan the Training

Typically, this is a dialogue between the trainer and the client. Often, the client will have a specific topic or activity in mind. Sometimes additional topics will be suggested during the needs assessment process when the trainer probes to get more information. The trainer can share a list of module topics and/or several module summaries to aid the client in selection of a topic(s) from the series.

Select the Training Module

The Parent/Professional Training Modules offer a wide selection of topics and activities. The trainer can select the module that deals with the topic chosen by the client.

Review the Training Module

The module provides the core activities and a suggested trainer agenda. The trainer can adjust both to reflect their individual style and the needs of the client.

Identify Additional Resource Materials

The trainer can add articles, resources, and other materials to the core training module. Often a trainer will introduce local resources or pertinent sample materials.

Deliver the Training

The Parent/Professional Training Modules are best delivered by a training team of a parent and a professional. Collaboration is modeled by the team as each member of the team displays unique perspectives, abilities and knowledge as they enhance each others presentation styles.

Evaluate the Training

Evaluation is an essential element of any training. Each module includes an evaluation that assesses the specific objectives of the module and the usefulness of materials. These evaluations can assist the trainer in refining the module content and modifying presentation style, if needed.

"Follow-Up" the Training

It is a good practice to follow-up any training with a personal visit, letter, or a phone call. The trainer may wish to keep a list of names, addresses, and phone numbers of participants to facilitate follow-up. The follow-up usually consists of discussion about how the training may have impacted the client's personal or professional life. Clients may express the desire for further training and/or materials and resources.

Communication Skills

(For All Interested and Involved Parents and Professionals)

You, as a participant, will learn about:

- effective communication styles
- the difference between assertive and aggressive communication
- barriers to good communication
- how to accept your rights and overcome barriers to effective communication
- self-defeating personal messages
- practicing communication skills

Day and Date:

Time:

Location:

For More Information, Call:

Please Come

Communication Skills

Topic Narrative

Communication is a basic life skill. The ability to communicate effectively just seems to make life work. Parents and professionals are presented with hundreds of situations daily that call for skill in communicating. Each person chooses, consciously or subconsciously, to behave and communicate in different ways in different situations and relationships. These styles of communication are learned behaviors which can be grouped into the categories of assertiveness, aggressiveness, and nonassertiveness.

The assertive style of communication is characterized by appropriately honest, direct, self-respecting, and straightforward communication. By contrast, the aggressive style of communication is inappropriately honest, direct, self-enhancing, and derogatory. The non-assertive style is self-denying, emotionally dishonest, and inhibited. A further comparison of assertive, nonassertive and aggressive behavior reveals that each has a specific goal and conveys an attitude that serves to defeat or enhance communication.

Assertive Behavior

Goal: The major goal of assertive behavior is better communication and feeling an increased sense of self-esteem. This is achieved by acting in ways which you yourself can respect even though your assertion may not get you what you want. There is a willingness to negotiate compromises as long as those compromises don't involve violating your integrity as a person.

Attitude: The attitude that is conveyed by assertive behavior is one of self-respect and respect for the other person's rights in the situation. This involves treating yourself and the other person as basically OK people even when you don't like the other person's behavior.

Your feelings when you are assertive: Feeling in control of yourself and self-respecting at the time you are assertive and afterwards. Anxiety or anger may be present but you cope with the feelings instead of letting them overwhelm you.

Other people's feelings about you when you are assertive: Generally respect. Sometimes surprise or disapproval.

Other people's feelings about themselves when you are assertive: Valued, respected. Sometimes anxious.

Aggressive Behavior

Goal: The major goal of aggressive behavior usually is to prove you are OK through winning and getting your way regardless of the rights of others. A common, though not always conscious, second goal is to make others feel inferior and not OK.

Attitude: The attitude that is conveyed through aggressive behavior is that others are inferior, stupid, or in some other way not OK human beings. If you can follow a statement with "you dummy" - you're being aggressive.

Your feelings when you are aggressive: Feelings of being threatened, powerless, and self-righteously outraged dominate you at the time. There is often a feeling of being out of control. Later you may feel guilty.

Other people's feelings about you when you are aggressive: Fear, hate, revenge.

Other people's feelings about themselves when you are aggressive: Hurt, humiliated, put down, inferior.

Nonassertive Behavior

Goal: The major goal of nonassertive behavior is to avoid hassle, conflict, and others' disapproval.

Attitude: The general attitude conveyed by nonassertive behavior is one of being less important than other people.

Your feelings when you are nonassertive: Usually very anxious, helpless, inadequate, and/or inferior. These feelings overwhelm you at the time. Later you may feel very hurt and angry.

Other people's feelings about you when you are assertive: Pity, irritation, disgust. Sometimes approval.

Other people's feelings about themselves when you are nonassertive: Superior and sometimes guilty.

In summary: It is important that parents and professionals practice assertive communication to (1) enhance their own self-esteem; (2) state their case, feelings, or limits without violating the rights of others; and, (3) to keep the lines of communication open.

Overview

The main goal of this module is to provide participants with information and skills to be effective communicators for the purpose of improving parent-professional communication.

Objectives

1. Survey assertive interactions.
2. Develop an understanding of the premise and research on which assertiveness training is based.
3. Identify potential barriers to effective communication.
4. Become familiar with the differences between assertive, aggressive and nonassertive communication.
5. Practice effective communication skills.
6. Accept personal rights and overcome barriers to effective communication.
7. Identify dysfunctional personal messages.

Objective Number	Suggested Minutes	Content	Presentation Strategy
	10	Introductions, Objectives and Agenda Review	
	15	Inclusion Activity/Warm Up	
1	5	Assertiveness Survey Pretest	Individual Activity
2	5	Introduction to Assertiveness Training	Lecturette
3	5	Barriers to Assertive Communication	Lecturette
4	20	Communication Styles Assertive, Aggressive, Nonassertive Communication	Lecturette and Large Group Discussion
5	45	Parent-Professional Communication Role Play Scripts	Role Play
	10	Break	
6	10	Accepting Personal Rights Part A	Large Group Brainstorm
6	10	Accepting Personal Rights Part B	Individual Activity with Large Group Report Back and Debriefing
7	10	Dysfunctional Personal Messages	Large Group Participation and Discussion
	10	Assertiveness Survey - Post-Test; Assertiveness Evaluation	Individual Activity and Large Group Discussion
	10	Conclusion and Evaluation	
	165		

Suggested Trainer Agenda

WORKSHOP TITLE: Communication Skills DATE: _____ PAGE: 1

PRESENTERS: _____

CLIENT: _____

GOAL: To provide participants with information and skills to be effective communicators for the purpose of improving parent-professional communication.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Survey assertive interactions.
2. Develop an understanding of the premise and research on which assertiveness training is based.
3. Identify potential barriers to effective communication.
4. Become familiar with the differences between assertive, aggressive and nonassertive communication.
5. Practice effective communication skills.
6. Accept personal rights and overcome barriers to effective communication.
7. Identify dysfunctional personal messages.

TIME	WHO	TRAINER ACTIVITIES/CONTENT	PARTICIPANT ACTIVITIES	HANDOUTS MEDIA
10 minutes		Welcome Introductions Objectives and Agenda Review. Display Objectives and Agenda on Chart Paper	Listen	Chart Paper Pens Tape Chart of Objectives and Agenda
15 minutes		Inclusion Activity - Warm up Complete: "It's comfortable for me to talk to professionals/parents when..."	Participate or Pass	
5 minutes		Assertiveness Survey Activity/Handout 1 Individual Activity Distribute Handout 1 Participants to complete survey (survey to serve as a pre and post	Complete Survey	Handout 1

Suggested Trainer Agenda (Continued)

TIME	WHO	TRAINER ACTIVITIES/CONTENT	PARTICIPANT ACTIVITIES	HANDOUTS MEDIA
		assessment device). Use Alternate Activity 1 with professionals if they are present in workshop.		
5 minutes		<u>Introduction to Assertiveness Training</u> Activity/Handout 2 Lecturette Distribute Handout 2 Assertiveness training is based on the premise that social behavior is learned. Therefore, with new training and practice, inappropriate behavior can be unlearned and replaced with more effective ways of interacting. Research suggests assertiveness seems to be a situationally specific behavior rather than a personality trait. Individuals may be assertive with strangers but aggressive or nonassertive with people who have power over them (friends-power to withdraw affection; employers-power to evaluate job performance). Refer to Handout 2. Give a few examples of what assertiveness is and is not.	Listen, discuss, ask questions	Handout 2
5 minutes		<u>Barriers to Assertive Communication</u> Activity/Handout/Overhead 3 Lecturette Distribute Handout 3 Display Overhead 3 There are four barriers to assertive communication: 1. Inability to discriminate between assertive, aggressive, and nonassertive communication. 2. Inability to intellectually and emotionally accept your personal rights. 3. Dysfunctional (self-defeating) personal messages. 4. Lack of skills. Trainer will review barriers. Each will be dealt with in this workshop session.	Listen, discuss, ask questions	Handout 3 Overhead 3 Overhead projector Screen

Suggested Trainer Agenda (Continued)

TIME	WHO	TRAINER ACTIVITIES/CONTENT	PARTICIPANT ACTIVITIES	HANDOUTS MEDIA
20 minutes		<u>Communication Styles - Assertive, Aggressive and Nonassertive Communication</u> Activity/Handout/Overhead 4 Lecturette and Large Group Discussion Distribute Handout 4 Display Overhead 4 We are working to break down the 1st barrier to effective communication: "The inability to discriminate between assertive, aggressive and nonassertive communication." Refer to Overhead and Handout--go over characteristics of each communication style--embellish information with the following information as needed or as time permits. **Assertive** <u>Behavioral Characteristics</u> — <u>Effects</u> Expressing yourself in ways that show respect for your own and other's feelings and beliefs, in a *direct, honest, appropriate* manner. — Feelings of self-respect, personal power. Lines of communication are kept open. (ask P's for other effects) •*Direct*: "I think my child could benefit from speech services" as opposed to "I wonder if my child will ever stop lisping." •*Honest*: Does your statement communicate your true feelings? It would be "pseudo-honest" if you signed approval for the IEP, stated you were satisfied with meeting and walked away silently disagreeing with the goals. •*Appropriate*: Assertive communication is always situationally specific. It is not in the spirit of	Listen, discuss, ask questions	Handout 4 Overhead 4

Suggested Trainer Agenda (Continued)

TIME	WHO	TRAINER ACTIVITIES/CONTENT	PARTICIPANT ACTIVITIES	HANDOUTS MEDIA
		assertive communication if you decide to give your child's teacher some negative feedback just as he/she is leaving the principal's office. The teacher can't "save face"; in effect you've violated the teacher's human rights. **Aggressive** Behavioral Characteristics: Making sarcastic remarks, blowing up, blaming, attacking or humiliating others. Finger pointing, fist pounding. Effects: Relationships damaged. Reduced personal effectiveness. Alienate others. **Nonassertive** Behavioral Characteristics: Withdrawing, placating, self-depreciating statements, avoiding. Apologetic words, hedging, veiled meanings. Effects: Loss of self-respect, anxiety, feelings of powerlessness, helpless "victim."		
45 minutes		Parent Professional Communication Activity/Handout 5-5A Role Play Distribute Handout 5 and 5A Co-Trainers to role play each script and lead participants through each accompanying exercise. Trainer to encourage participant involvement as much as possible in the role plays. Refer to Handout 5A and call attention to characteristics of various styles at the completion of each role play.	Listen, answer questions, discuss	Handouts 5,5A
10 minutes		Break		

Suggested Trainer Agenda (Continued)

TIME	WHO	TRAINER ACTIVITIES/CONTENT	PARTICIPANT ACTIVITIES	HANDOUTS MEDIA
10 minutes		Accepting Personal Rights Activity/Handout 6 - Part A Large Group Brainstorm Distribute Handout 6 after completion of Part A and B Refer to "Barriers to Assertive Communication - Handout 3." We will be discussing 2nd barrier. Persons who believe they have a right to do something are more likely (not guaranteed) to do it, than if they don't hold that belief. Individuals have "inner voices"/belief systems/ injunctions that work for or against actively asserting themselves, e.g., if the belief is held that "I have a right to feel comfortable in the IEP meeting," one is likely to do certain things to this end--choose comfortable seating arrangement, ask for what you want, invite supportive advocate or friend to IEP meeting. Trainers to Participants: "Let's identify some of the rights (basic human rights and legal rights guaranteed by special education legislation) that people in this group believe they have." Trainer writes on butcher paper. The list may look something like this: • The right not to be an expert on all educational matters. • The right to disagree with professionals. • The right to say "no" without feeling guilty. • The right to ask for clarification of terms. • The right to request the most appropriate education for my child.	Participate in generating list	Chart paper
10 minutes		Accepting Personal Rights Activity/Handout 6 - Part B Individual Activity with Large Group Report Back and Debriefing Guided Fantasy Exercise (to assist people to accept their rights) Direct participants to look at the listing of personal rights, then lead participants through the following activity. (Note to Trainer: Be aware of voice tone and pacing.) "Silently select one of the rights which you feel you should have but it would be most uncomfortable for you to accept."	Participate in Guided Fantasy	

Suggested Trainer Agenda (Continued)

TIME	WHO	TRAINER ACTIVITIES/CONTENT	PARTICIPANT ACTIVITIES	HANDOUTS MEDIA
		a. Close your eyes or simply look down. Get in a comfortable position. b. Take a deep breath and hold it as long as you can and then let it out slowly. c. Now imagine that you have the right you selected from the list. d. Imagine how life would change as you accept this right. e. How would you act? f. How do you feel about yourself? g. How do you feel about other people? - - - -Pause for Participants to reflect- - - - h. Now imagine that you no longer have that right. i. Imagine how your life would change from the way it was moments ago. j. How do you act now - and feel about yourself - and about other people? Debrief the activity by asking the following questions: 1. What right did you select? 2. How did you feel when you accepted the right? 3. Did you react differently when you had the right? 4. What did you learn about yourself in this exercise? (Note toTrainer: Use your judgment as to whether participants feel comfortable enough to respond to these questions as a total group, or have people form pairs to share responses). Trainer asks these additional questions: 1. How can you help yourself select rights? 2. What methods do you use to deny yourself rights?		

Suggested Trainer Agenda (Continued)

TIME	WHO	TRAINER ACTIVITIES/CONTENT	PARTICIPANT ACTIVITIES	HANDOUTS MEDIA
		Trainer summarizes, "The concept of rights helps people feel they can justify their assertive actions," i.e., when persons hold the belief that they have rights, they are more likely to act in an assertive manner. Any questions or comments? Give participants Handout 6		Handout 6
10 minutes		<u>Dysfunctional (Self-Defeating) Personal Messages</u> Activity/Handout 7 Large Group Participation/Discussion Distribute Handout 7 at end of activity	Listen, share, ask questions	
		We will not be dealing with the 3rd barrier to effective communication. Often people are blocked from acting assertively because they have "inner voices" / internal dialogue that supports nonassertive or aggressive behaviors. Examples: • I'd be self-centered if I took time for myself. • If I ask questions, people will think I'm dumb and I'd just be taking up valuable time. Invite group to contribute/highlight any dysfunctional statements that have arisen spontaneously in workshop. Distribute Handout 7 as further example of dysfunctional personal messages.	Re-examine Assertiveness Survey	Handout 7
10 minutes		<u>Assertive Survey, Assertiveness Evaluation</u> Activity/Handout 8 Individual Activity and Large Group Discussion Distribute Handout 8 at end of activity Refer to Assertiveness Survey (Activity 1). Have participants resurvey themselves based on their experiences in the workshop.	Re-examine Assertiveness Survey	

Suggested Trainer Agenda (Continued)

TIME	WHO	TRAINER ACTIVITIES/CONTENT	PARTICIPANT ACTIVITIES	HANDOUTS MEDIA
		Questions to Ponder: 1) Based on your experiences in today's workshop, do you feel that you might be able to be more assertive in your interactions with professionals/parents? 2) Can anyone recall an experience where they have been nonassertive and imagine the same experience if you handled it assertively. Would anyone like to share this experience?		
		Distribute Handout 8. Have participants use this to evaluate themselves as they practice assertive behaviors.		Handout 8
10 minutes		<u>Conclusion</u> Restate Objectives. Thank Participants. Complete Evaluation/Handout 9.	Complete Evaluation	Handout 9

Communication Skills
Activity/Handout 1
Individual Activity
5 Minutes

Assertiveness Survey

For Parents

Do you feel and act assertive in your interactions with professionals (e.g.,teachers, psychologists, administrators, speech and language specialists, Regional Centers, doctors, etc.)

1. I feel comfortable and at ease at a conference with professionals. yes/no
2. I ask questions if I do not understand clearly the professional perspective or point of view. yes/no
3. I make specific direct requests for support and cooperation from professionals that I feel are necessary. yes/no
4. I refuse to accept plans or suggestions that I feel are inappropriate or inadequate for my child. yes/no
5. I tell others at a meeting if I feel angry or disappointed. yes/no
6. I feel that I am entitled to the resources, services and support necessary to do my job and to meet the needs of my child. yes/no
7. I feel that my opinions are respected by professionals. yes/no
8. I tell others at a meeting that I am pleased with/or appreciate their efforts. yes/no
9. I feel that I look and act self-confident during conferences. yes/no
10. I feel that conferences with professionals result in plans that increase my effectiveness in dealing with the needs of my child. yes/no

Identify times when you have felt or acted in a nonassertive manner.

_____

_____

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Adapted from an assertion inventory originally written for parents in: Markel, C.P. and Greenbaum, J. *Parents are to be seen and heard: Assertiveness in educational planning for handicapped children.* San Luis Obispo: Impact Publishers, 1979.

Communication Skills
Alternate Activity/Handout 1
Individual Activity
5 Minutes

Assertiveness Survey
For Professionals

Do you feel and act assertive in your professional interactions with parents?

To find out, circle the answers to the following questions:

1. I feel comfortable and at ease at a conference with parents. yes/no
2. I ask questions if I do not understand clearly the parent perspective or point of view. yes/no
3. I make specific direct requests for support and cooperation from parents that I feel are necessary. yes/no
4. I refuse to accept plans or suggestions that I feel are inappropriate or inadequate for the child. yes/no
5. I tell others at a meeting if I feel angry or disappointed. yes/no
6. I feel that I am entitled to the resources, services and support necessary to do my job and to meet the needs of the child. yes/no
7. I feel that my opinions are respected by parents. yes/no
8. I tell others at a meeting that I am pleased with/or appreciate their efforts. yes/no
9. I feel that I look and act self-confident during conferences. yes/no
10. I feel that conferences with parents result in plans that increase my effectiveness in dealing with the needs of the child. yes/no

Identify times when you have felt or acted in a nonassertive manner.

_____

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Adapted from an assertion inventory originally written for parents in: Markel, C.P. and Greenbaum, J. *Parents are to be seen and heard: Assertiveness in educational planning for handicapped children.* San Luis Obispo: Impact Publishers, 1979.

Communication Skills
Activity/Handout 2
Lecturette
5 Minutes

Assertiveness Is...Assertiveness Is Not

Assertiveness Is:

1. expressing your needs clearly and directly
2. expressing your ideas without feeling guilty or intimidated
3. sticking up for what you believe your child needs - even though professionals may not agree
4. knowing your rights and how to get them
5. documenting what your child needs and all facts pertaining to his/her case
6. treating professionals like a partner
7. effective communication
8. conveying your feelings of self-confidence when you communicate with others
9. advocating effectively on your own behalf
10. self-reliance and independence
11. persisting until you get all the services your child needs
12. analyzing a problem and pinpointing area of responsibility before you act
13. agitating to get necessary legislation passed and get it implemented
14. organizing for change
15. having a positive attitude at all times

Assertiveness Is Not:

1. beating around the bush before stating your needs
2. feeling too guilty or afraid to express your needs
3. agreeing with professionals - no matter how you feel - because "professionals know what's best"
4. ignorance about your rights
5. leaving everything to others because "they know how to do these things"
6. apologizing when asking for what is rightfully yours
7. ineffective communication
8. begging for what is legitimately yours by law
9. abdicating to others your right to advocate on behalf of your own child
10. reliance and dependence on others
11. giving up when you run into red tape
12. acting precipitously before you get all the facts
13. letting the politicians "take care of laws and all that political stuff"
14. acting "only" on your own behalf
15. giving in to defeat

Communication Skills
Activity/Handout/Overhead 3
Lecturette
5 Minutes

Barriers To Assertive Communication

Four Barriers To Assertive Communication Are:

1. **Inability to discriminate between Assertive, Aggressive, and Nonassertive Communication.**

2. **Inability to intellectually and emotionally accept your personal rights.**

3. **Dysfunctional/self-defeating personal messages.**

4. **Lack of skills.**

Communication Skills
Activity/Handout/Overhead 4
Lecturette and
Large Group Discussion
20 Minutes

Communication Styles

Passive/Nonassertive

Behavior characteristics include not expressing feelings, needs and ideas; ignoring your rights and allowing others to infringe on them. It is emotionally dishonest, indirect, inhibited and self-denying. The nonassertive person allows others to choose for them. The result is anxiety and disappointment with a possible buildup of anger and resentment.

Aggressive

Behavior characteristics include expressing feelings, needs and ideas at the expense of others, ignoring the rights of others, trying to dominate and even humiliate. This is defensive, hostile and self-defeating and can result in feeling angry, self-righteous, and possibly guilty.

Assertive

Characteristics include expressing feelings, needs and ideas and standing up for legitimate rights in ways that don't violate the rights of others. It is emotionally honest, direct, expressive and self-enhancing. The assertive person makes choices, is usually confident, and feels good about self.

Parent/Professional Communication

Role Play Scripts

Script A

Situation: Dan Jones, a learning disabled 4th grader, is getting into daily fights on the playground.

Principal: You have to do something about Dan's behavior. I can't always be around to correct him. You have to take responsibility.

(Stand in front of parent with hands on hips. Make it clear that you are blaming the parent.)

Parent: Well, I don't know - I mean - I can't. Oh gosh! All right, I'll try.

(Slump in chair, talk in a soft, hesitant voice, eyes are downcast)

Exercise: Script A

1. The message expressed by the principal is:

   a. assertive
   b. aggressive
   c. nonassertive

2. The parent's response is:

   a. assertive
   b. aggressive
   c. nonassertive

3. The effect of the message given to the parent would be to:

   a. continue discussion
   b. discontinue discussion

4. The effect of the parent's response would be to:

   a. continue discussion
   b. discontinue discussion

Script B

Situation: I.E.P. Team Meeting

Special Education Teacher: Mrs. Smith, I have reviewed Bob's test scores and he is still 3 years below grade level in the areas of math and reading even after all our efforts.

(Open and direct with good eye contact)

Parent: I feel a little defeated when I hear your comments. Tell me some more details about the reading test. Are there small areas of improvement?

(Firm but warm tone of voice, relaxed motions)

Exercise: Script B

1. The message expressed by the special education teacher is:

   a. assertive
   b. aggressive
   c. nonassertive

2. The parent's response is:

   a. assertive
   b. aggressive
   c. nonassertive

3. The effect of the message given to the parent would be to:

   a. continue discussion
   b. discontinue discussion

4. The effect of the parent's response would be to:

   a. continue discussion
   b. discontinue discussion

Script C

Situation: Parent - teacher conference. Regular classroom, teacher is discussing Beth's behavior with parent.

Regular Education Teacher: Beth is behaving differently in class. You know what I mean?

(Weak soft voice, slumped shoulders, downcast eyes)

Parent: No - I don't know what you mean. You need to explain yourself.

(Tense, loud voice, rigid posture)

Exercise: Script C

1. The message expressed by the regular education teacher is:

   a. assertive
   b. aggressive
   c. nonassertive

2. The parent's response is:

   a. assertive
   b. aggressive
   c. nonassertive

3. The effect of the message given to the parent would be to:

   a. continue discussion
   b. discontinue discussion

4. The effect of the parent's response would be to:

   a. continue discussion
   b. discontinue discussion

Script D

Situation: Parent is requesting an I.E.P. meeting 6 months after last I.E.P. meeting.

Principal: Another meeting? What could possibly be different in only six months? Are you unhappy with the teacher? You know your son is no angel.

(Cold, staring eyes - harsh voice)

Parent: I can understand your concern about taking time for another meeting. I feel a meeting is necessary in light of some new medical information. When can a meeting date be finalized?

(Sitting erect in chair, good eye contact, relaxed voice)

Exercise: Script D

1. The message expressed by the principal is:

   a. assertive
   b. aggressive
   c. nonassertive

2. The parent's response is:

   a. assertive
   b. aggressive
   c. nonassertive

3. The effect of the message given to the parent would be to:

   a. continue discussion
   b. discontinue discussion

4. The effect of the parent's response would be to:

   a. continue discussion
   b. discontinue discussion

Script E

Situation: Special education teacher and parent are holding a regularly scheduled parent-teacher conference.

Special Education Teacher: Really we don't even need to be having this conference, you know almost everything is fine.

(Hesitant voice, lots of hand gestures, look as if you don't mean what you're saying)

Parent: I feel like it's good for us to meet regularly. Tell me how Mary is doing in her new reading book.

(Sitting erect in chair, good eye contact, relaxed voice)

Exercise: Script E

1. The special education teacher message is:

   a. assertive
   b. aggressive
   c. nonassertive

2. The parent's response is:

   a. assertive
   b. aggressive
   c. nonassertive

3. The effect of the message given to the parent would be to:

   a. continue discussion
   b. discontinue discussion

4. The effect of the parent's response would be to:

   a. continue discussion
   b. discontinue discussion

Communication Styles

Verbal and Non-Verbal Components

	Nonassertive (I'm not OK)	**Aggressive** (You're not OK)	**Assertive** (OK-OK)
Verbal	Apologetic words Hidden meanings Failure to come to the point Rambling, disconnected At a loss for words Failure to say what you really mean. "I suppose", "you know"	Demanding words Accusations Name-calling "You" messages that blame or label	Statement of wants Honest statement of feelings Objective words Direct statements that say what you meant "I" messages
Non-Verbal			
A. General	Actions instead of words, hoping someone will guess what you want Looking as if you don't mean what you say	Exaggerated show of strength Sarcastic style Air of superiority	Attentive listening behavior Assured manner, communicating caring and strength
B. Specific			
1. Voice	Weak, hesitant, soft, sometimes wavering	Tense, shrill, loud, shaky, cold, demanding "Deadly quiet," superior, authoritarian	Firm, warm, well-modulated, relaxed
2. Eyes	Lacks eye contact, downcast, teary, pleading	Expressionless, narrowed, cold glaring looks, not really seeing you	Open, frank, direct Eye contact, but not staring
3. Stance & Posture	Lean for support, stooped, excessive head nodding	Hands on hips, feet apart, stiff and rigid, rude	Well-balanced, straight on, relaxed
4. Hands	Fidgety, clammy	Clenched, abrupt gestures, finger pointing, fist pounding	Relaxed motions

Adapted from: *The new assertive woman*, by Lynn Z. Bloom, Karen Coburn, and Joan Pearlman. New York: Delacorte Press, 1975.

Communication Skills
Activity/Handout 6
Large Group Brainstorm
10 minutes

Assertive Rights

The following are five of the most basic assertive rights:

1. The right to be treated with respect.
2. The right to express yourself.
3. The right to decide what you do with your body.
4. The right to decide what you do with your time.
5. The right to decide what you do with your property.

In addition to these basic, general rights, the following are examples of some more specific rights that have been identified by various authors:

1. The right to say no and not feel guilty.
2. The right to ask for what you want (recognizing that the other person has the right to say no).
3. The right to change your mind.
4. The right to make mistakes.
5. The right to experience and express your feelings, thoughts and opinions.
6. The right to ask for information.
7. The right to be left alone.
8. The right to do less than you are humanly capable of doing.
9. The right to set your own priorities and make your own decisions.
10. The right to take time to slow down and think.
11. The right to choose not to assert yourself.
12. The right to feel good about yourself.
13. The right to consider your own needs.
14. The right to change.
15. The right to act in ways that promote your dignity and self-respect as long as others' rights are not violated in the process.
16. The right to be successful.
17. The right to be independent.
18. The right to get what you pay for.
19. The right to be listened to and taken seriously.
20. The right to have rights and stand up for them.

Taken from: *The new assertive woman*, by Lynn Z. Bloom, Karen Coburn, and Joan Pearlman. New York: Delacorte Press, 1975.

Communication Skills
Activity/Handout 7
Large Group Participation
and Discussion
10 Minutes

Dysfunctional Personal Messages

(Thoughts That Cause Problems)

1. People must love me or I will be miserable.
2. Making mistakes is terrible.
3. People should be condemned for their wrongdoing.
4. It is terrible when things go wrong.
5. My emotions can't be controlled.
6. I should be terribly worried about threatening situations.
7. Self-discipline is too hard to achieve.
8. I must depend on others.
9. My childhood must always affect me.
10. I can't stand the way others act.
11. Every problem has a perfect solution.
12. I should be better than others.
13. If others criticize me, I must have done something wrong.
14. I can't change what I think.
15. I should help everyone who needs it.
16. I must never show any weakness.
17. Healthy people don't get upset.
18. There is one true love.
19. I should never hurt anyone.
20. There is a magic cure for my problems.
21. It's others' responsibility to solve my problems.
22. Strong people don't ask for help.
23. I can do things only when I'm in the mood.
24. Possible is the same as probable.
25. I am inferior.
26. I am always in the spotlight.
27. People ought to do what I wish.
28. Giving up is always the best policy.
29. I need to be sure to decide.
30. One must always be sure to decide.
31. Change is unnatural.
32. Knowing how my problems started when I was young is essential.
33. Everybody should trust me.
34. I should be happy all the time.
35. There is a secret, terrible part of me that controls me.
36. Working on my problems could hurt me.
37. The world ought to be fair.
38. I am not responsible for my behavior.
39. It is always better not to be genuine.
40. I have no problems.
41. Anxiety is always dangerous.
42. You can't tell me anything about me that I don't know.
43. People shouldn't act the way they do.
44. I should be able to control my kid's (or spouse's) behavior.
45. Willpower alone can solve all my problems.

McMullin, R. and Ely, J. *Talk sense to yourself.* Lakewood, Colorado: Counseling Research Institute, 1975.

Communication Skills
Activity/Handout 8
Individual Activity and
Large Group Discussion
10 Minutes

Assertiveness Evaluation

As you practice assertive behaviors, use the following self-checklist. Be tough on yourself, because that will be the process to help you achieve your goal.

Ask yourself:

- Did I say what I really wanted to say...assertively?
- Was I direct?
- Did I stand up for my own rights without infringing on anyone else's?
- Were my facial expressions consistent with what I intended?
- Was my posture appropriate?
- Was my voice strong and calm?
- Did I feel good afterwards?

Communication Skills

Summary

Each person chooses, consciously or subconsciously, to behave and communicate in different ways in different situations and relationships. Those styles of communication are learned behaviors which can be grouped into the categories of assertiveness, aggressiveness and nonassertiveness (passiveness).

There are four barriers to assertive communication.

1. Inability to discriminate between assertive, aggressive, and nonassertive communication.
2. Inability to intellectually and emotionally accept your personal rights.
3. Sending self-defeating personal messages.
4. Lack of skills.

Each communication style has different behavioral characteristics and effects on ourselves and on our relationships with others.

Differences Between Assertive, Aggressive And Nonassertive Communication

	Behavioral Characteristics	Effects
Assertive	Expressing yourself in ways that show respect for your own and others' feelings and beliefs, in a direct, honest, appropriate manner.	Feelings of self-respect, personal power. Lines of communication are kept open.
Aggressive	Making sarcastic remarks, blowing up, blaming, attacking or humiliating others. Finger pointing, fist pounding.	Relationships damaged. Reduced personal effectiveness. Alienate others.
Nonassertive	Withdrawing, placating, self-depreciating statements, avoiding, apologetic words, hedging, veiled meanings.	Loss of self-respect, anxiety, feelings of powerlessness. Helpless "victim."

Each communication style has distinct verbal and non-verbal components.

	Non-Assertive (I'm not OK)	**Aggressive** (You're not OK)	**Assertive** (OK-OK)
Verbal	Apologetic words Hidden meanings Failure to come to the point Rambling, disconnected At a loss for words Failure to say what you really mean. "I suppose", "you know"	Demanding words Accusations Name-calling "You" messages that blame or label	Statement of wants Honest statement of feelings Objective words Direct statements that say what you meant "I" messages
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Adapted from: *The new assertive woman*, by Lynn Z. Bloom, Karen Coburn, and Joan Pearlman. New York: Delacorte Press, 1975.

Persons who believe they have a right to do something are more likely (not guaranteed) to do it than if they don't hold that belief. We all have basic human rights and legal rights. The concept of rights helps people feel they can justify their assertive actions.

Often people are blocked from acting assertively because they have "inner voices"/dialogue that supports nonassertive or aggressive behaviors. These are usually based on past experiences and can be "unlearned" if they are identified and inspected in light of current realities. It is often helpful to first imagine yourself and then practice behaving assertively in non-threatening surroundings.

As you practice assertive behavior, ask yourself the following questions.

- Did I say what I really wanted to say...assertively?
- Was I direct?
- Did I stand up for my own rights without infringing on anyone else's?
- Were my facial expressions consistent with what I intended?
- Was my posture appropriate?
- Was my voice strong and calm?
- Did I feel good afterwards?

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Evaluation

Your responses to the questions/statements below will assist us in improving this module. Please respond to all items. Your participation in this evaluation is completely anonymous. DO NOT place your name anywhere on the evaluation.

Based on a scale of 1 through 10, how much of the information presented was new to you?

_____ 1 is not much new; 10 all new

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. After this session, I am aware of the concept of assertiveness training.	1	2	3	4	5
2. This session helped me identify barriers to effective communication.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Because of this session, I understand the difference between assertive, aggressive, and nonassertive communication.	1	2	3	4	5
4. As a result of this session, I have accepted at least one personal right.	1	2	3	4	5
5. After this session, I can identify several defeating personal messages.	1	2	3	4	5
6. The material presented was sensitive to all cultural groups.	1	2	3	4	5
7. The material covered information which was appropriate to all handicapping conditions.	1	2	3	4	5
8. The material presented matched my needs.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I will use some of the information/ resources that were introduced.	1	2	3	4	5
10. The instructors did a good job.	1	2	3	4	5

11. Specific suggestions to improve this module: _____

_____

_____